Implementation Team Meeting Notes

March 2, 2006

1. Greetings and Introductions.

The March 2 Implementation Team meeting was chaired by Jim Ruff and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. the following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at this meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should contact Kathy Ceballos at 503-230-5420.

It was noted that today is Jim Ruff's last meeting as IT chair. Various IT members, including Howard Schaller, Tony Nigro and Bill Tweit, thanked Ruff for his fairness, his calm, reasoned approach, and his leadership of the Regional Forum through what has been an extremely complex and challenging period, and wished him well in his new role at the Northwest Power and Conservation Council.

2. Updates.

A. In-Season Management (TMT). Cathy Hlebechuk said Libby was at elevation 2411.1 feet on February 28, just under its February flood control elevation. The project will likely remain on minimum outflow through March, because its March 31 flood control elevation is also about 2411 feet. The March final forecast is expected to be available by March 7; once it is received, the March 31 flood control elevations will be adjusted. Dworshak was at elevation 1524.9 feet on February 28, slightly above its target flood control elevation. Dworshak is releasing about 3 Kcfs right now. Grand Coulee was at elevation 1255.8 feet on February 28, well below its end-of-February flood control elevation.

The salmon managers will likely be requesting a Dworshak/Grand Coulee flood control shift this spring, Hlebechuk continued; that operation is being coordinated with the Colville Tribe. Can we do a shift in a year with above-average runoff? Ruff asked. If Dworshak is 3 MAF or below, it is possible, and so far it is, Hlebechuk replied.

Recently, TMT has been discussing operations in support of the Spring Creek Hatchery release, she said; an SOR was received which requested spill in addition to corner collection operation. The TMT could not reach consensus and the issue was elevated to the IT. Last Friday, the IT convened a conference call, at which it was

decided by the Corps that no spill would occur this year. The salmon managers decided not to elevate the issue to the executives. The Spring Creek Hatchery fish are being released today (3/2/); starting at 10 am tomorrow, Bonneville will try to maintain a tailwater elevation of 14.3-14.8 feet to maintain compensation depth over the chum redds, to avoid TDG problems. The corner collector operation will begin early tomorrow morning. There will be a conference call tomorrow afternoon to discuss the tailwater operation. It was also agreed that the corner collector operation will continue for five days, or until the 95% passage point is reached, whichever occurs first. There will be another conference call on Monday to discuss the passage numbers.

The fall/winter update to the Water Management Plan has now been finalized, said Hlebechuk. The WMP itself won't be completed until the spring summer update ot the plan is completed later in March; it will then become an attachment to the WMP. Lower Snake dredging should now be done; the Lower Snake projects should be able to operate at MOP this spring. The corner collector high-flow PIT-tag detection system is being installed, and that work is going well, despite adverse conditions early in the season. The Dalles wire rope replacement for bays 1-9 is also going well; the first 6 bays will be complete by early April, and bays 7-9 should be completed by the first week in May. There is also an Ice Harbor flow deflector survival test going on, said Hlebechuk; there was some excitement associated with that yesterday, because all of the Lower Snake pools were full and inflows to Lower Granite were exceeding 50 Kcfs. It took us most of the morning to get the system under control. It wasn't a big deal, Hlebechuk said, but it was a test of our skills.

B. Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). The ISAB has two pending assignments, said Doug Marker: to review the COMPASS model, and to look at the draft Comparative Survival Study report from 2005, and the criticism provided by Bonneville and the NMFS Science Center on that report. Marker said work is expected to be completed by mid-March and both reviews will be posted on the Council's web site.

C. Water Quality Team (WQT). See agenda item IV, below.

D. System Configuration Team (SCT). Bill Hevlin said the SCT is just beginning the FY'07 CRFM prioritization process. The first step will be to update the prioritization criteria that were used last year. The second step will be for the federal and non-federal participants to caucus; what we're missing, at this point, is Washington's participation – they're the only one of the eight voting members that hasn't been participating.

We also started talking about the Corps' flood control study at our last meeting, Hevlin said; there were a lot of technical questions and concerns raised. SCT asked that a subgroup be convened to address some of those questions and concerns, but that meeting didn't happen. It's still important for that to happen, Hevlin said, to facilitate further discussion at SCT. Some of the questions included, can the comment period be extended? (UPDATE: the COE has extended the comment deadline to March 31st). What about the errors in the statistics and authorizations included in the recon-level

report? Also, what about potential impacts to other operators, including Reclamation and Idaho Power? What potential biological benefits are associated with changes to flood control operations? If the funds for this study are going to come out of CRFM, we need some idea of what we would be getting, biologically, for that investment.

Next, FFDRWG is focusing on the spill patterns to be used for the spring and summer studies, especially at the Snake River projects, Hevlin continued. It's a little more difficult this year, because the spill operations are under court order. Normally we would be able to adjust spill operations to maximize the value of the data obtained through the studies. We're still trying to do that, without letting research needs detrimentally impact survival, Hevlin said.

When will the FY'07 CRFM rankings be complete? Marker asked. Initial rankings will be done by May, but at the same time, the Corps will be sharpening its budget, Hevlin said – once that is complete, the cut-off line, below which projects won't get funded, will be established. That's when SCT will start to talk about the items below the line its members feel really should be funded, he explained. Also, by August, we'll be getting preliminary results from some of the spring studies; that can also have an effect on funding priorities.

What about the language the Appropriations Committee inserted into the funding bill this year? Ruff asked. Actually, it was the president's budget, Eric Braun replied – it specified that most of the CRFM budget will be shifted from the Corps' construction general budget to its operations and maintenance budget. As far as we know, this change will not alter the payment or reimbursement process that is currently in place, Braun said. Will the next RSW that goes in have to be funded completely in one year? Ruff asked. I don't know the answer for sure, Braun replied; there is some language about continuing contracts that is currently under discussion. I don't know, at this time, how that will play out for future budgets, Braun said.

E. FCRPS Litigation Update. The next quarterly report filing to the court is due on April 3, said Ruff. I do know that some of the plaintiffs have asked for an additional 4-5 months – until March 1, 2007 – to complete the remand process, he added. It was agreed to revisit this topic at the April IT meeting.

F. Status of Little Goose RSW Issue. Ruff said that, two weeks ago, there was an IT conference call on the dispute over whether the Little Goose RSW should be installed by 2008, or 2009. Rock Peters said that, at the recent IT conference call, the Corps agreed to assess its internal capabilities, in terms of the manpower and resources needed to get the Little Goose RSW installed by 2008. We would have 7-8 months to accomplish the design, Peters said; we first looked at risk. One risk would be that the Lower Monumental RSW schedule could suffer; Walla Walla District is very concerned about that. A second thing Walla Walla District felt would be at risk is the McNary surface passage project. The experts at Walla Walla District are the same people who would be working on the Little Goose project.

Specifically, we identified three areas of concern about the accelerated Little Goose RSW schedule, Peters said. The first is the foundation for the RSW – we have no surveys of the areas where the RSW might be installed. The second concern is the tailrace – there is no flow deflector on the bay the region is most interested in exploring for RSW installation, bay 1. At last week's ERDEC trip, they looked at tailrace conditions at Little Goose; their conclusion was that tailrace conditions at Little Goose are very sensitive to flow changes. If you look at the model, there is an upstream eddy running at 5-6 fps. If you get juveniles in that area, they're going to be moving in circles. Developing spill patterns is going to take a lot of time, Peters said.

The third issue is the location of the RSW. While the region has said they believe bay 1 is the most likely location for the RSW, after the most recent ERDEC trip, researchers now feel there may be as many as four or five suitable locations.

The bottom line is that the Corps does not feel that it is feasible to get the Little Goose RSW installed by 2008, Peters said – Division simply isn't willing to assume the risks associated with a 2008 installation schedule. Could the McNary work be transferred to Portland District? Kim Fodrea asked. We looked at the resources available to us regionally, and it doesn't appear to be feasible to dump that project on an AE at this time, Peters replied.

I'm still struggling with why these sets of concerns would have you prioritizing work at McNary higher than work at Little Goose, said Tweit. That's not what I said, Peters said – we're going to move out on Little Goose as expeditiously as possible, but even if we dropped all work at McNary, we still couldn't get everything done in time to allow us to install the Little Goose RSW by 2008. The bottom line is that we have to move out right away just to get this installed by 2009, Peters added.

Hevlin noted that he has been involved with the Little Goose sectional model for two years now; there is still considerable disagreement, among the parties in the region, about the actual level of risk associated with accelerated design and installation of the Little Goose RSW. I don't disagree, said Peters; all I can tell you is that I am not an expert in risk, and therefore have to rely on others in the Corps who are. This is their considered opinion, Peters said. I understand, said Hevlin; I would urge the Corps to commit totally to making sure the 2009 installation schedule is adhered to, and the project is done right. We are not going to elevate this issue to the executives, Ruff added, as long as it is understood that the Corps is firmly committed to installing the Little Goose RSW by the spring of 2009. Agreed, with the understanding that major unforeseen problems could alter the schedule, Peters replied.

G. Juvenile Fish Transportation Permit One-Year Extension. This is an update, said Ruff; we wanted to let everyone know that the Corps' juvenile transport permit, which is approved by NOAA Fisheries, has expired. We did an emergency three-month extension while we decided what to do; ultimately, it was decided to grant a one-year extension while the BiOp remand process is completed. What we are proposing is a one-year extension of the Corps' existing transport permit, with a new,

long-term permit to address any of the issues that may come out of the BiOp remand process. There were no comments or questions from IT.

3. RM&E Issues.

A. Update on the Council's Mainstem/Systemwide Review Process for 2007-2009 Funding. Marker distributed a written summary of the Council's project selection process and schedule. What we're working on, currently, in the mainstem/systemwide, is a schedule of discussions we hope will result in draft staff recommendations by May. We have a planning meeting set up between BPA, CBFWA and the Council on March 9, and an open meeting on March 20, he said.

We're reviewing the mainstem/systemwide projects under five categories, including monitoring and research, habitat and others. There may be a need for five separate work groups, but given the demands on everyone's time, that may not be possible. There are particular challenges associated with monitoring and evaluation projects, he said, including the future role of the FPC, the adequacy of PIT-tagging, and funding for the acoustic tag arrays out in the ocean.

The ISRP will complete their review by early June; we will then go into a public comment process so that the Council can make its funding recommendations to Bonneville by October, Marker said. Isn't CBFWA doing its mainstem/systemwide project review in March? John Palensky asked. Yes – we will be synching up with that process, Marker replied. In response to another question, Marker said the Council is prioritizing a total of $32 million per year for these projects, plus another $14 million for broader-scale projects, so funding will obviously be tight. Marker added that all of the FY'07 proposals have now been posted to the CBFWA website, and are available for review.

B. Report on Corps' System Flood Control Study. Lonnie Mettler led this presentation, titled "System Flood Control Review: Regional Agency Review Briefing." Working from a series of overheads, he touched on the following major topics:

- Current action: prior to proceeding to the feasibility study, the Corps is asking the region to review and provide support for further actions. It is important the region understand the significant commitment required not only in the time it will take to answer some very critical questions on the benefits of flow to improved fish passage, but also the costs associated with doing so.
- Recommendations: federal interest; set of actions to satisfy objectives; regional support.
- Background (guidance): 2000 BiOp, 2003 Senate committee language, 2004 Updated Proposed Action, revised 2004 BiOp
- Background (purpose and scope): consider potential modifications to Columbia River flood control operations; consider how possible modifications would benefit the Columbia River ecosystem; continue to maintain acceptable levels of protection from damaging floods; continue to recognize all project purposes.

- Assumptions: initiation of the feasibility study is dependent on favorable agency review and Congressional notification; biological benefits linked to attaining flow objectives for fish; feasibility study (FS) alternatives will involve change in reservoir regulation to include Canadian storage regulation; all authorized project uses will be fully considered when formulating alternatives
- Further assumptions: new flood control damage curves will need to be developed; potential structural and/or operational modifications can be made at operating facilities or elsewhere in the basin to offset some if not all of the increased flood control risk; acceptable levels of flood control may need to be defined.
- Assumptions (continued): a non-federal partner will not be identified; funding for conducting a feasibility study will be cost-shared through hydropower ratepayer contributions; proposed work is compatible with other ongoing efforts in the region; FS will be phased.
- Phased approach (phase I) – focus: is there water available to achieve environmental benefits needed for the fisheries? Activities: hydrological evaluations, limited economic/engineering evaluations, limited environmental studies.
- Phased approach (phase II) – focus: do the environmental benefits justify the costs associated with changes to the flood control system? Activities: hydrology/hydraulic evaluations, economic/engineering studies, environmental studies to refine environmental benefits, limited cost estimates, fish/wildlife coordination.
- Phased approach (phase III) – focus: are there environmental benefits that can be achieved with investment and low risk of failure to the flood control system? What early action measures can be recommended? Activities: preparation of interim feasibility report; continuation of studies to finalize results and make a recommendation.
- Phased approach (phase IV) – focus: complete feasibility report and Environmental Impact Statement on a preferred alternative. Activities: prepare final feasibility report and EIS, conduct public hearings, seek Congressional authorization and appropriations to begin implementation of preferred alternatives.
- Timeline: submit reconnaissance report by summer 2006; complete project management plan by spring 2007; initiate feasibility study by spring 2007; complete feasibility study by fall 2012.

Finally, Mettler offered the following summary:

- Prior to proceeding to the feasibility study, the Corp is asking the region to review and provide support for further actions. It is important the region understand the significant commitment required not only in the time it will take to answer some very critical questions on the benefits of flow to improved fish passage, but also the costs associated with doing so.

Mettler noted that, as a part of this study, the Corps will also be considering non-

Corps projects, including the Canadian storage projects. Mark Schneider noted that the Transboundary Gas Group has been discussing many topics of relevance to the Corps' flood control study; he said he would welcome the opportunity to include Mettler and the Corps in future TGG discussions.

When you say "regional support," what, specifically, do you mean? Palensky asked. There was some Congressional language in 2005 indicating that we need to seek regional agency support and input, and that's what we've done, via mailing lists, via direct contact with flood control districts, Mettler replied. Isn't it more a case that Congress wants to be sure this is something the region wants before committing to a large funding outlay? Braun asked. Absolutely, Mettler replied. What about coordination with the Mid-Cs? Kim Fodrea asked. I think most of those folks are on the mailing list, primarily through SCT, Mettler replied.

One concern I see about this approach is that we have an interest in determining the absolute requirements for flood control, over and above all other project purposes, observed another participant. Will there be a way for us to look at flood control all by itself, independent of all other project purposes? he asked. I'm going to say yes, Mettler replied – I anticipate that there will be an alternative that looks strictly at, say, what if we take all of the water and use it solely to benefit fish, as one extreme or bookend.

Ruff noted that it is his understanding that the zero damage level for Portland Harbor is 450 Kcfs. One of the first priorities of this study, I would think, would be for the Corps to investigate whether 450 Kcfs is still the appropriate flow level, Ruff said – after all, that figure is based on the assumption that a whole system of dikes and levies is still operating efficiently, and I would think the Corps would want to verify that.

The assumption is that this study would be funded through CRFM, and that that money would then be repaid by Bonneville ratepayers? Marker asked. Yes, Mettler replied. And the cost of phase I would be just over $3 million? Marker asked. Correct, Mettler replied; the estimate is that phase II would cost $8 million+, phase III will cost about $10 million, and phase IV will cost $8 million+.

Marker said that the feedback he has gotten from the Council has been to the effect that these are all very important and complex questions. The Council members I've spoken to have been unanimous in their desire to have more time to comment, Marker said. We're not locked into a 45-day comment period, but we would like to negotiate a firm timeline for comments, so that we can continue to move forward, Mettler replied. I definitely think there needs to be more regional discussion before the recon-level study is finalized, Marker said.

Many of our largest storage projects are operated by the Bureau of Reclamation, Ruff observed – is Reclamation a full partner in this effort? No, Mettler replied – they have been kept apprised of what we're doing, and will be providing comments on the recon-level report. Actually, Fodrea observed, what was said at the last SCT meeting was that Reclamation has serious concerns about what they've seen of the recon-level

report, and would like a separate meeting with the Corps and BPA to discuss those concerns.

Ruff suggested that it may make sense to have an SCT work group convene a meeting on the technical questions that have arisen with respect to the recon-level report. I would also request that the comment period on the report be extended, to allow the SCT, the Council and others to provide well-reasoned comments, he said. The comment period has not yet been formally extended, said Ruff; I would add that, until that technical meeting occurs, it will not be possible for NOAA Fisheries to provide meaningful comments on the recon-level report. In response to a question, Mettler said he is not sure, at this point, whether the Corps has formally communicated with the various Governors' offices in the region. Silverberg suggested that this is another step that needs to occur before regional comments on the recon-level report can be finalized.

The discussion proceeded in this vein for some minutes. Ultimately, it was agreed that a SCT subgroup technical discussion will take place as soon as possible, and that this subgroup will likely take the form of a standing regional system flood control study technical team that will report, and provide feedback, to IT and NPCC. It was further agreed that the Corps will extend the deadline for written comments on the recon-level flood control study report to allow these technical discussions to occur. Peters said the Corps will need to have some internal discussions on these proposals before providing a formal response. It was agreed that the Corps – and the other IT participants – will discuss these proposals at the agency level, and will provide response via email by Monday, March 6 at 3 pm.

4. Planning/Decision-making Issues.

A. Update on the Corps' Lower Columbia River Water Quality Plan. Turner distributed a handout titled "Lower Columbia River TDG Management." This started last spring with a federal policy group developing management concepts that would apply to TDG in the Lower Columbia, he explained. There were three areas of emphasis: critical habitat below Bonneville, chum needs, and Bonneville Dam operations, Turner explained. The PNNL report on the research into TDG effects on fish below Bonneville is now available. Their main conclusion was that TDG of up to 120% had little or no effect on juveniles or adults, as long as compensation depths were available. However, recent research has identified concerns even at lower levels of TDG in vulnerable habitats or reaches, through chronic or multiple exposures, and community and ecosystem effects. The WQT has reviewed the report; the Corps and PNNL provided responses to those comments. The report generated some controversy; there was surprise about the scope of the report and some of the conclusions in the report. The report has been posted to the website and is available for regional review.

The Corps is now working on setting up monitoring at shallow-water sites below Bonneville, Turner continued; we are working with the WQT and LCREP to bring that together. Funding for this work is a concern, so this isn't a done deal yet, he said. Mike Schneider is also developing a report on TDG in the lower river, below Bonneville Dam,

including an evaluation of the fixed monitoring sites; that report was just sent to the WQT this morning, Turner said. In addition, PNNL will be conducting TDG monitoring at the Multnomah Creek and Ives Island chum spawning sites this spring, Turner said. That monitoring is scheduled to begin in April, once the spill season begins.

The bottom line is that the field work this year is pretty much confined to physical measurements of TDG, rather than biological effects, Turner continued. We're going to find out what we have in terms of contaminant loads this year, and will then see where we're going to go in 2007.

With respect to Bonneville operations for fish passage, this is being coordinated through AFEP and FFDRWG. It is possible that if we see fairly high survival through PH2, the corner collector and the MGR units at PH1, along with further work on the spillway, there may be some flexibility in the future to manage or limit TDG production at Bonneville. The goal is to achieve the best balance of Bonneville operations to provide good passage conditions for fish while still protecting downstream habitats. We will then look to provide TDG monitoring at appropriate sites to help us better manage the project, he said.

There are some issues, said Turner: first, the issue of priority. The Corps feels that, at some point, this needs to be a part of the program. What's the relative priority for this work to the region? We're mainly talking about chronic, sublethal effects, he said. We need some regional input on that topic. There are also funding constraints – that's another issue, so a prioritization is going to need to occur. There also needs to be a management plan for this effort; that has not been developed yet. The other question is, who writes that plan? Shouldn't it be a collaborative, multi-agency effort?

Another question is the role of the IT, Turner said. We're getting into an area of study that doesn't fit neatly into any of the current Regional Forum groups, because it includes elements of water quality, dam operations and biological effects. It would be fine if IT wants to weigh in on this, Turner said; any input you can give us as to priority, funding and IT role would be useful. To me, this may be an issue for the new BiOp, Peters added.

If you're looking for general input, said Ruff, I'm not sure you're going to get much support from NOAA Fisheries for another study on the scale of the Gas Abatement Study. Understood, said Turner; however, regional support is going to be needed if this effort is going to continue. It has to be a team effort, he reiterated.

Rudd Turner mentioned the disagreement within the WQT about the PNNL report, said Mark Schneider. The fisheries managers at WQT kept asking for evidence that there is a biological problem we need to be worried about, with respect to these low levels of gas in shallow-water areas. The report alleges that there are detrimental biological effects; however, the monitoring work will not be looking at those biological impacts for at least another year. I would add that our habitat division personnel have told me they haven't seen any biological impacts, and they're not worried about them,

said Ruff. It was agreed to revisit this issue at the April IT meeting.

B. Update on Sea Lion Control Measures at Bonneville Dam, 2006. Peters distributed a presentation titled "Sea Lion Deterrence at Bonneville Dam." He noted that the timing of sea lion arrival at the dam continues to advance; the sea lions have already arrived at the dam this year. The exclusion gates – the SLEDS – have already been installed on all of the major fish ladder entrances. We are also continuing to install acoustic deterrents; my understanding is that it sounds like a jet engine underwater, he said. We have already begun to initiate some harassment actions. We have also put a monitoring system into place to look at predation hits or take; we will have some radio-tagged fish at the dam this year to look at whether the SLEDS are causing any passage problems for spring chinook, Peters said.

I got a recent update, said Peters, the sea lion named Cecil (C404) showed up and entered the Cascade Island fishway, where he took a steelhead. He was hazed out of the ladder, and the SLED has subsequently been installed at that entrance. We have also had several confirmed reports of sea lions going after large sturgeon, he said. The bottom line is that the sea lion control measures are already up and running, and our monitoring efforts will continue in 2006.

We have documentation that 3.4% of the spring run was taken by sea lions in 2005, said Garth Griffin; that's based on observations only, and the true number may well be in excess of 10% of the total run. We got a little bit of money from the FCRPS BiOp funding to make certain improvements, including continued branding to identify returning, persistent offenders; pinniped sweeps and harassment within the BRZs to keep the animals from establishing a comfort level near the dams; and new and different acoustic deterrents, including, potentially, portable devices that can be towed behind a boat for use in the hazing efforts.

Griffin noted that he has recently given presentations to the Fish and Wildlife Commissions of both Oregon and Washington; both states are extremely concerned about the impacts of sea lion predation on sturgeon populations. The states intend to use their authorities to deter, non-lethally, nuisance animals, Griffin said; there has also been some talk of the states potentially pursuing the lethal removal option under Section 122.

The bottom line is that we're expecting low spring chinook returns again in 2006, said Tweit; this being the case, the sea lion predation issue looms even larger. These animals are feeding machines, and they're very intelligent, added Griffin – this problem is not going to go away. In fact, given sea lion population trends, it is only going to get worse in coming years.

C. Washington Water Initiative Update. Gerry O'Keefe said some quite extraordinary things have happened recently in Washington; we now have a new state law on water resources on the Columbia River, as well as some fairly significant

resources – about $250 million over the next 10 years – to implement it. You're all aware that there is a long-time debate about whether there is enough water in the Columbia system to significantly help salmon, he said. That has led to some very contentious discussions, in Washington, as to what kind of mitigation was needed for any new water rights. In 2001, that culminated in a petition for rulemaking that would have closed the Columbia and its eastern Washington tributaries to any new water rights. A second request for rulemaking would have allowed new water rights without mitigation. The Governor at the time directed us to solve this impasse, and develop some creative alternatives to allow the state to move forward.

The bottom line, said O'Keefe, is that, from our point of view, we needed very clear policies from the legislature about when we could and could not issue new water rights. In the bill that has now been passed, the answer is broken into a couple of parts. First, for existing permitted water, if you want to acquire some of that water for irrigation purposes, there can be no detrimental impact on river flows – no net loss in flow during July and August. The second part of the bill, in terms of clear guidance, says that as Washington considers developing new storage, that a third of the active storage capacity will be used to improve flows for fish, in consultation with fisheries managers and co-managers.

We really feel that this is the front end of a sustainable approach to water management in Washington, O'Keefe said – we have made a real effort to tie the availability of new water rights to improving the health of the river during critical times of the year. It also addresses the most critical aquifer issue we face, the Odessa, Tweit added.

Have you had much interest from the water resources departments in other states regarding this legislation? Ruff asked. Yes – from Oregon, Idaho and Montana, O'Keefe replied.

With respect to the Odessa sub-area, in the 1960s and '70s, DOE's attitude was that, eventually, that part of the Columbia Basin Project would be developed. That didn't happen, and now there isn't much groundwater left in that aquifer. Our friends in the agricultural community have told us that unless we fix that problem, we will have a $600 million annual hole in our economy and will lose 7,000 jobs. One possible solution includes a modest drawdown at Grand Coulee, about 82 kaf, or one foot of storage in most years. There may also be a possibility of acquiring 105 kaf through changes in operation at Potholes Reservoir, O'Keefe said. I think there is a lot of excess capacity within the Columbia Basin project to solve this problem, but that won't work if a solution is externally imposed – it will have to come from within, O'Keefe said.

In summary, our hope, at this point, is that as we look ahead, there are grounds to be hopeful, said O'Keefe. We have potentially turned a corner in terms of our relationship with people in Eastern Washington, in terms of their understanding that they don't necessarily have to give up their lifestyle in order to help salmon.

Do you anticipate any sort of legal challenge from within the state of Washington? asked one participant. Other than the routine challenge once we issue the first new water right, no, O'Keefe replied.

With respect to the additional water from Grand Coulee, would that be subject to the one-third for fish requirement? Ruff asked. Yes, O'Keefe replied – a third of that volume would be used to benefit flows during July and August.

5. Regional Forum Process Issues.

A. Long-Term Strategic Planning. Silverberg asked the IT to consider, and to bring forward, any issues they see coming up that would benefit from a proactive approach.

B. Implementation Team in the Post-Ruff Era. Ruff noted that John Palensky will, at least in the interim period, be chairing the IT. Ruff added, that he will be attending on behalf of the Council, and that he is willing to help in any way he can. I will continue to work closely with you, and look forward to that, Ruff said – I hope we can continue to work well together.

6. Next IT Meeting Date.

The next Implementation Team meeting was set for Thursday, April 6. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.